

DIALOGUE AS NECESSITY OF PRESENT- DAY EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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Abstract

The article is devoted to learning problems in contemporary school, which have their roots in present- day information society. The pupils are more self- informed through different IT channels. From one side this information provides some refinement of knowledge, from other- organization of this knowledge is poor and create new problems for teachers. As solution of this problem author suggests dialogical learning when activities of teachers and schoolchildren are based in dialogical cooperation. Author analyses three possible forms of dialogue and some experiments when they are used. These forms are teacher ↔ learner, learner ↔ learner and learner ↔ source of information dialogue. He points out conditions (political and educational), which can make dialogue more successful. The author is sure, that dialogical learning is future of all educational systems. The pupils must work out their own educational plans and teacher must be prepared and open to such demand.

KEYWORDS: information society, dialogue, dialogue learning, forms of dialogue.

Introduction

Present- day investigators use many labels to describe the contemporary society. From them the information society is more widespread. Information society is based on economy in which the creation, distribution, diffusion, use, integration and manipulation of information is significant. Economist Fritz Machlup (1902- 1983) uses the concept of the knowledge industry in his study "The production and distribution of knowledge in the United States" (Machlup, 1962). He distinguished five sectors of the knowledge industry: education, research and development, mass media, information technologies, information services. Peter Drucker (1909- 2005) argued about transition from an economy based on material goods to one based on knowledge (Drucker, 1969), Marc Porat distinguishes a primary and a secondary sector of the information economy. The primary sector includes information goods and services that are directly used in the production, distribution or processing of information, the secondary- information services produced for internal consumption by government and non-information firms (Porat, 1977). Jean-François Lyotard (1924- 1998) suggests, that postindustrial society makes knowledge accessible to the layman, because knowledge and information technologies would diffuse into society and break up Grand Narratives of centralized structures and groups (Lyotard, 1984). Manuel Castells (b. 1942) argued that key features of informational society are network logic of its basic structure (Castells, 2000).

All these conceptions are more or less based on economics, but they are fortifying a necessity of new educational conceptions too. It's not a question of using information technologies in school. It's a question of new relations between teachers and pupils. There are no more active teacher because of his knowledge and passive pupils because of their uninformed intellect. There are too active sides, but with different problems and positions. One of the ways to change educational concepts is dialogic learning, when all educational activities have their roots in egalitarian dialogue (based on validity of arguments and not on authority or power claims).

Aim of the research

The aim of current research is to identify current problems of educational activities in school, which are related to development of information society, and to discuss dialogic learning as way to promote solutions for some of them.

Object of the research

The object of research is dialogic learning, its theoretical and practical role in current education.

Methods and methodologies

The actual research was done through studies of theoretical and practical literature in Latvia and abroad, interrogation of teachers and pupils in Latvia, practical experiments in schools.

Results of the research

When we are speaking about education in post- soviet countries, all researchers can ask themselves- does it differs from education in West countries. The same situation is about usage of information technologies (IT). In the communist countries usage of IT was poor and rare. Therefore it is necessary to point out, that situation now is quite different. "Late jump" in the new world of technologies provided to post- soviet countries more developed technologies as they were in West at the same time. Pos- soviet people were more open to change their life as people in West. The only limits were financial, especially for those institutions which depended on public money. One of these institutions is school. Therefore the common problem of post- soviet countries is difference between using of informational technologies in private companies and in schools. The development of private companies was speedy, development of the schools- slow. In 2004 only 20% of pupils in Latvia had possibility to use network (internet) in the educational establishments, but in private establishments more than 80 % had their network. Therefore pupils accepted IT channels as more private. As result pupils in post- soviet world concluded, that IT education and school education is not related. Education was divided into two fields. The one is formal education formed in school, the second- informal and private education from informational technologies. The situation was worsened by some conservative teachers, who were sure, that no information from internet is significant for school.

Unfortunately or fortunately both "educations" are present in the same mind of pupils and no teacher can ignore it. Researchers from Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy Ausma Špona and Dmitrijs Igoņins found out, that majority of pupils in Riga are sure, that the most interesting and personally important source of information for them is internet. Te second place is given to friends, third- to parents. Books are on the place 4, teachers- on the place 8, but school textbooks- only on the place 9 (Špona, Igoņins, 2011, p.19). At the same time only from school majority of young people are tended to receive a good knowledge (51.18 %), cultural background (18.30%) and assistance for development (47.58 %) (Špona, Igoņins, 2011, p.25).

During interrogation of some 20- 30 Latvian history teachers some crucial problems of reciprocity between private education from IT and formal education were found.

► **Reality and virtual reality problem.** All information sources of internet create a virtual reality. Sometimes it is based on reality, sometimes no. The large problem of present- day schoolchildren is to separate virtual reality (fantasy) from "real" reality. The history teachers are worried about mixture of times and civilizations in some games or movies Teachers are forced to explain, that real Romans didn't fight with dinosaurs or it is impossible to change the past with magic.

► **Problem of basic (key) knowledge.** Internet is a large reference library, which can be used in any time and in any place. In that way we can unburden our memory. But some key information is crucial for us. We cannot make any actions without it. The schoolchildren are using internet references to early. So they count on, that all information would be presented in network. Such attitude troubles formation of key knowledge in their minds.

► **Problem of perception.** The internet has special structure of its organization. Small texts, large images, different short time movements and easy search. No one of these qualities is present in books or in some traditional educational sources. The teachers have observed that schoolchildren have problems with large texts and book reading. They can watch images without real perception and they need only quick actions.

Good or bad information society is our reality. We must accept it. The teachers must look what for schoolchildren they have and think how do their best. But - is it possible to find a universal key for all contemporary pupils?

Let's look on some issues!

Educational process from internet is partly done. Pupils know something, but this knowledge has no good organised structure. Creation of this structure must be interactive. From one side it must contain knowledge systems provided by formal education, from another- purposes, aims of individual personalities. Therefore we can say that universal key for such study is dialogue. Only dialogue gives us possibility to listen, evaluate and advise at the same time.

Dialogical learning is no new. The idea of dialogue as teaching method dates back to ancient Greece. It is frequently rooted to the Socratic dialogues. Contemporary understanding of dialogues is based on modern phylosophy- Mikhail Bakhtin's (1895- 1975) postulated human need of creating meanings in a dialogic way with other people (Bahtin, 1981), Martin Buber's (1878- 1965) dialogical existence theory

of human beings (Buber, 2010), Jürgen Habermas's (b. 1929) theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984) etc.

One of the first contemporary educators, who started discussions about dialogical learning, was Brazilian Paulo Freire (1921- 1997). His teachings were based on political discussions about freedom in education. In his famous work "Pedagogy of the oppressed" (Freire, 1970) he speaks about usual education as "banking education", when:

- the teacher teaches and the students are taught;
- the teacher knows everything and the student know nothing;
- the teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
- the teacher talks and the students listen- meekly;
- the teacher disciplines, the students are disciplined;
- the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply,
- the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
- the teacher chooses the program content, and the students adapt them;
- the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which he or she sets in opposition of the freedom of the students;
- the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while students are more Objects (Freire 1970, p. 73).

The "banking education" creates "adaptive" and "manageable" beings who can serve the interests of oppressors, but the real knowledge emerges only through invention and re- invention, through restless, impatient inquiry with the world and with the each other (Freire 1970, 72, p.73). Instead of banking education Freire promotes dialogue and problem- posing education. Freire distinguishes between dialogical actions (the ones that promote understanding, cultural creation, and liberation) and non-dialogic actions, which deny dialogue, distort communication, and reproduce power.

Dialogue is the encounter between people, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. It cannot exist in absence of profound love to the world and to people. The naming of the world is creation and recreation. True dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking (Freire, 1970, p. 92).

Freire speaks about "generative theme" as start point of educational dialogue. Generative theme is not some kind of working hypothesis. It comes from one's own existential experience and critical reflection of human-world relationship and relationship of people (Freire, 1970, p. 97).

German educator Rainer Winkel (b. 1943.) is sure, that present-day school contains many antinomies-contradictions without solution (Winkel, 1986). In such situation pupils are not tended to accept authorities, but their own experience is not sufficient. Our teaching process is more broken and all pedagogical theories made before are not useful. The only way to succeed is critical- communicative didactics (Winkel, 1986, p. 83). The foundation stone for it is common discussion between pupils and teachers about themes and curricula. More questions, fewer statements.

British educator Robin Alexander has many arguments about dialogical teaching too (Alexander, 2008). They are communicative (talk as human principal mean of communication), social (talk builds relationship), cultural (creation of individual and collective identities), neuroscientific (language builds connections in the brain), psychological (language as mean of development), pedagogical (more success in teaching) and political (dialogue as base for modern democracy) (Alexander, 2004, p.37).

Spanish sociologist Jose Ramon Flecha (b. 1952) pointed out principles for dialogical learning: egalitarian dialogue (based on the validity of reasoning persons), cultural intelligence (each person may demonstrate his or her ability in different environments), transformation (it transforms people's relationship to their environment), instrumental dimension (it deals with gaining all instrumental knowledge and skills considered necessary), meaning creation (it generates common meaning and purposes), solidarity (no one is neutral), equality of difference (all diversity must be accepted) (Flecha, 2000).

In Latvia some steps to dialogical learning were made by Jeļena Jermolājeva. She developed a theory of dialogical personality. This is a person, who (1) recognises relationship with world and persons around him, (2) is tended to answer in dialogic situations, (3) have a high activity, (4) have a high level or reflection abilities and rational thinking (Ермолаева, 1997, p.57).

There are three main ways to manage a dialogical educational process. We can speak about dialogues (1) teacher ↔ learner, (2) learner ↔ learner and (3) learner ↔ source of information.

In teacher ↔ learner dialogues the principal problem is difference of social positions and experience. The teacher acts as a part of educational system. He has strong purposes, limited by his duties. He must put into effect the social requirements determined by national standard of education. In Latvia, as it could be in many post-soviet countries, teachers have more freedom now. At the same time totalitarian traditions are strong. Educational bureaucracy is large, control documents are in great number and they are written in language not accessible to common teacher. In this situation the teachers are not interested to cooperate with their pupils. They are worried about implementation of their duties instead.

Majority of teachers have an academic education. Their experience in fields of their speciality and their mileage is on higher level than pupils.

Pupils in totalitarian school were objects. They had to accept what teachers were doing. From the one side it was oppression, from another- it was a good position too. Obedience liberates not only from activity to make own decisions, but from responsibility too. This tradition is still strong.

The author made an opening experiment in history lessons. It was done in three schools- in capital city Riga, in small city Valmiera and in country village Kocēni. All participants were from grade 8.

The task of pupils was to formulate questions to teacher and explain why did they consider these issues to be important. At the next lesson pupils evaluated answers of teachers with grades and based their decision.

Only 4.9% of pupils were able to base their choice with some arguments of personal curiosity. 45.3% of pupils have difficulties to base their questions and their explanations were diffuse. 49.8 % of pupils used a formal motivation- "I am asking it, because I had to" or- "I am asking, because it's good to learn something".

The evaluation of teacher's responses showed a great importance of teacher's authority. Only 1.3% of motivation was based on valid arguments. Pupils are afraid to analyse opinion of teacher. 34.6% of evaluation was diffuse ("depends to say", "I am not sure, but I hope so", "I feel so"), but 62.3%- based on teacher's authority ("he/she knows better", "he/she is always right", "he/she is a good teacher").

In additional questionnaire majority of pupils (67.6%) declared, that it wasn't easy to formulate questions. As main reason for problems pupils suggested the difficulties with information. Some declared, that all is said in the textbook, another- that they have no additional information for questions.

Before this experiment the same pupils were investigated in field of their learning interest. This investigation ended with conclusion that level of learning interest in history is high. At the same time majority of schoolchildren were certain, that they interests does not coincide with the interests of the teacher.

Such results lead to conclusion, that pupils have problems to realise the real role of school teachings in their life and cannot make the teacher as their own guide in the field of knowledge. They are sure, that the real answers on the real questions are somewhere outside school- in network or in their community of friends and relatives.

The real situation burdens dialogue teacher ↔ learner. For good running dialogue we need valid orders from learner side and openness from teacher side.

The learner ↔ learner dialogue is based on confidence. Learners are equal in their social position and experience. At the same time some problems arises from their level of knowledge and self- confidence. The key methods for learner ↔ learner dialogue are those of cooperative learning. Pupils are stimulated to work together in pairs or groups, to solve or discuss the problems.

The opening experiment for learner ↔ learner dialogue actions was started in the same group with pair action. The pupils were asked to evaluate each other answers. They had to find success and failure in the partner's written replies.

This experiment lasts know, but first steps indicate, that we can divide the pupils into four groups.

The first group is high confident pupils. They are sure, that they have a good knowledge and therefore other pupils can rely on them. Their advantage is skill to find mistakes in other's actions, but their disadvantage- cooperation and understanding. They know how to find errors in other works, but cannot see success.

The second group is undetermined pupils. They are looking for some self- expression, but are no sure, that their works are complete. Their actions are unstable. They are able to assess other work, but are not sure about their judgments. Therefore they are constantly asking for supervision of the teacher.

The third group is silent pupils with good knowledge, but low confidence. They can accomplish the task, but fear the condemnation of other students. They are trying to conceal their real opinion or declare it through teachers support.

The last group is silent pupils with bad knowledge. Theoretically they are able to evaluate some issues on their level of perception and understanding. The problem is conviction that all actions could meet with failure because of bad experience. They need encouragement of teacher.

All these observations indicate that the main problem of learner ↔ learner dialogue could be personal attitude of pupils to themselves, to others and to learning.

As it was in teacher ↔ learner dialogue, the pupils need some more recognition that they may, can and must create and improve their personal "account" of knowledge with personal needs and attitudes and it could be done in the school they attend.

The role of teacher could be important too. His or her supervision must encourage, but not manage relations of pupils in learner ↔ learner dialogue. It's not the easy task, because majority of pupils feel much confident, when some decisions are made outside and not by them.

Learner ↔ source of information dialogue was studied by Jelena Jermolajeva (Ермолаева, 1997). Jermolajeva considers, that dialogue is not only a teaching method, but some kind of lifestyle. School lessons are too short for real dialogue, but there we can create some short dialogic situations instead (Ермолаева, 1997, p.58). As premise for instant dialogue Jermolajeva requests (1) dialogical attitude, (2) antinomic thinking, (3) open perception of concepts (Ермолаева, 1997, p. 17- 24).

The dialogic attitude she describes as creation of dialogic space with three dimensions.

The first axis of this dimension is attitude towards other side of dialogue. At the beginning all people are tended to see other member of dialogue as means to express themselves. They are discovering real qualities of opposed side during the dialogue.

The second axis is attitude to self. At the beginning all people try to save their personalities as they are. During the dialogue they are changing.

The third axis is attitude to dialogue. At the beginning people are trying to use it as means for their current needs. Dialogical actions stimulate them to accept the dialogue as value itself (Ермолаева, 1997, p.18- 19).

Antinomic thinking is based on confidence, that all issues are contradictory by nature. The pupils must not only accept it, but respect it in all situations.

Open perception of concepts urges us to accept the worlds as flow of changes. Nothing is unchangeable, incontrovertible and completed.

After some experiments in school, Jermolajeva is sure, that learner ↔ source dialogue is more accessible in secondary schools, where pupils have a good level of abstract thinking and are able to study philosophic concepts (Ермолаева, 1997, p.76).

The author hopes that dialogical teaching and dialogical methods will be distributed to our schools more and more. However, a dialogue requires many changes in the education system.

- **Reduction of state interference.** The public education is a part of state system. Sometimes it is managed in the same way as state bureaucracy. Orders what to teach are given by state. If we would create the contemporary school for pupils and school for dialogue, we need fewer instructions from state and more orders from pupils. The state regulation of education must be reduced to coordination without oppression.

- **Much more teachers open to cooperation.** Teachers have to work not for the officials but for their students. National standards, programs and learning process in school must be more flexible. Teachers must learn to listen, what their pupils really need.

- **Much more active pupils.** From the first day in school, we must say to children, that they have a duty to work out their personal programme for studies. They must think about what exactly will be needed to them from school.

Dialogue school is not easy for management. At the same time it could happen, that it will be the only school, which would be able to expand in future.

Conclusions

- Rapid development of information society puts forward a question about new directions and ways in education. This question is especially significant in post- soviet countries where development of informational technics in educational system was slower as in private sectors. As result two different

information spaces were created. Schoolchildren have the private information IT space, which sometimes is more extensive than that of teachers.

- Dialogical learning offers us the way to future of education. Through dialogue we can develop information, which is accumulated by schoolchildren from IT.

- Dialogical learning is based on teacher ↔ learner, learner ↔ learner and learner ↔ source of information dialogues. All of them could be successful, if pupils would be able to work out their personal programme for studies, teachers would be open and flexible, less managed by state bureaucracy. The state educational policy must be guided towards needs and values of pupils. The education must become rather service than state policy.

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DIALOG ALS NOTWENDIGKEIT DES HEUTIGEN BILDUNGS- PROZESS

Vilnis Purēns

Zusammenfassung

Wort Zusammenfassung: Der Autor legt seine Ansichten über Dialog-basiertes Lernen in Schulen, die Notwendigkeit für Dialog in die Schule und ihre Experimente und Lettland.

Heutige Forscher nutzen eine Vielzahl von Etiketten, einen zeitgenössischen Gesellschaft zu beschreiben. Von ihnen die Informationsgesellschaft ist weiter verbreitet. Informationsgesellschaft basiert auf Wirtschaft, in dem die Erstellung, Verteilung, Verbreitung, Nutzung, Integration und Manipulation von Informationen ist wichtig. Konzeptionen der Informationsgesellschaft sind, mehr oder weniger, auf Wirtschaftlichkeit bezogen, aber sie sind eine Notwendigkeit für neuer Bildungsmissionen auch. Es ist nicht nur eine Frage der Nutzung von Informationstechnologien in der Schule. Es ist eine Frage von unterschiedlichen Beziehungen zwischen Lehrern und Schülern. Es gibt nie mehr passive Schüler wegen seiner uninformierte Intellekt. Lehrer und Schüler sind zwei aktive Seiten in Lernaktivitäten

Dialogisches Lernen ist keine neuigkeit. Die Idee des Dialogs als Lehrmethode geht zurück auf antike Griechenland. Es wird häufig zu den sokratischen Dialogen verbunden. Modernes Verständnis der Dialoge ist auf der Basis moderner phylosophy (M. Buber, M. Bachtin, J. Habermas u.a.) gegründet. Als Vollstrecker des Dialogs in heutige Pädagogik Autor zitiert P. Freire (Brasil) , R. Winkel (Deutschland), R. Alexander (Großbritannien), J. R. Flecha (Spanien) un J. Jermolajeva (Lettland).

Es gibt drei Formen des Dialogs: Lehrer ↔ Schüler, Schüler ↔ Schüler und Schüler ↔ Informationsquelle.

Autor durchgeführten Experimente mit Dialog Lehrer ↔ Schüler (studenten konnten Lehrer Fragen stellen und ihre Antworten mit Schulnoten auswerten) zeigen, dass Aktionen von Schülerinnen und Schüler erhebliche Auswirkungen von die Autorität des Lehrers haben. Die Schülerinnen und Schüler setzen ihre Ziele nicht , sondern stützt sich mehr auf den Lehrer. Experimente mit Dialog Schüler ↔ Schüler (Studenten konnten sich gegenseitig ihre Arbeit bewerten) stellt sich die Frage über Schüler Selbstwertgefühl. Studierende mit hohem Selbstwertgefühl neigen dazu, andere zu ignorieren. Studierende mit geringem Selbstwertgefühl verschwand aus ihren Urteilen. Experimente mit Dialog Schüler ↔ Informationsquelle war von J. Jermolajeva gemacht. Aus ihrer Sicht diese

Dialoge sind auf die Fähigkeit der Weltliche Widersprüche und Variabilität gegründet und deshalb mehr geeignet für die Sekundarstufe.

Abschließend folgert der Autor, dass ein Dialog-basiertes Lernen eine Reihe von Änderungen im Schulalltag erfordert. Wir müssen von staatlicher Regulierung zu studentischen Nachfrage wechseln. Lehrer müssen offener werden und die Studierenden sein persönliches Trainingsprogramm zu ausarbeiten. Dialog Schule ist nicht einfach für das Management. Gleichzeitig wäre die einzige Schule, die in Zukunft vorhanden ist.